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SUBJECT: EAST JAVA: PRESIDENT YUDHOYONO OPENS EDUCATION DAY AMID
STUDENT PROTESTS

¶1. (U) Summary: President Yudhoyono visited East Java May 12-13 May for National Education Day opening ceremonies at Airlangga University in Surabaya. The President was greeted by small-scale student protests calling for reduction in fuel and food prices, expulsion of foreign oil companies and a solution to the Sidoarjo mudflow disaster. Consulate Surabaya attended opening ceremonies at which the President put forward a vision for Indonesian education, albeit in broad strokes. With the national spotlight on local education, East Java officials have admitted that illiteracy is a significant problem. End Summary

¶2. (U) Police prevented a few hundred student protestors greeting the Presidential motorcade from entering the campus at Airlangga University. The students held signs demanding a reduction in fuel and food prices, a new government economic team, an end to foreign oil and gas operations and finally a solution to the Sidoarjo mudflow disaster. The protestors represented various local universities and a wide range of student groups including: The Indonesian Muslim University Student Committee for Action (KAMMI); The Indonesian Muslim Students Association (HMI); The Nadhlatul Ulama Student Movement (PMII); The National Movement of Indonesian University Students (GMNI); and The Christian University Student's Movement (GMKI). No mention was made of the protests at the ceremony.

Awards for "Educational Heroes"

¶3. (U) In a 12 May speech opening ceremonies on Indonesia's National Education Day, President Yudhoyono praised the teachers of Indonesia particularly those who "struggle in isolated areas--they are the real heroes." In his introductory remarks, the Minister of Education Bambang Sudibyo explained that East Java had made strides in education and Airlangga is a leading university and a natural fit for the event. The Governors of Central Java, West Sumatra and Riau were also given awards for excellence in managing education in their provinces.

A Vision Built on Buzzwords

¶4. (U) After thanking the teachers of Indonesia for their hard work, the President explained the desired goals of educational reform without offering a detailed plan. In a speech peppered with English buzzwords, the president exhorted educators to produce students who are: "self-generating", "self-developing" and "independent." He stressed that Indonesia must foster a "critical mass" of citizens who can create a "knowledge-based society", full of "intellectual curiosity." A "world class university" and an "open university" are key parts of the strategy, he said. Apparently referring to resolve and determination, the President called on his audience not to be either (in English) "permissive" (or now in Indonesian) "lunak"

(soft). "A permissive nation cannot become a developed nation".
Having set these goals, the President was vague on how they
might be achieved.

East Java Can't Read

15. (U) 4.5 million East Javans over the age of 15 are illiterate, making the province among the least literate in Indonesia according to Head of East Java Education and Culture Office Rasiyo, as quoted by local media on May 11. Bambang Sudibyo, the Minister of Education told local media that illiteracy in East Java is 11.97 percent, well beyond the national average of 5 percent. Rasiyo reminded the press that since 75 percent or 3.5 million illiterate citizens are 65 or older, many lack the motivation to learn at this point in their lives. The highest rates of illiteracy are found in the Regencies of Malang, Probolinggo, Sumenep and Pamekasan. East Java is ranked fifth in illiteracy behind Papua, West Nusa Tenggara, South Sulawesi and Bali. Education Minister Sudibyo said that reducing the rate is "homework" for East Java's Education and Culture Office.

MCCLELLAND